



## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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### **Great Lakes Revenue Vessels**

Instead of larger cutters, “revenue boats” were stationed at important ports within the Great Lakes, such as Detroit and Rochester, New York. Determining boat names and crew composition requires further study.

#### **War of 1812 Events and Operations:**

**June 18, 1812.** President James Madison signs a declaration of war and **the War of 1812 officially begins.** The congressional authorization states “*that the President of the United States is hereby authorized to use the whole land and naval force of the United States . . . against the vessels, goods, and effects of the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the subjects thereof.*”

**July 13, 1812.** Genesee District customs collector Caleb Hopkins writes from near present-day Rochester, New York, to Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin “*The shores being lined with Soldiers has induced me to dismiss all of my Deputies at this time as not thinking them necessary—and shall wait your further directions of the subject . . .*”

**July 19, 1812.** A British squadron from Lake Ontario, including HMS *Royal George* (20) and HMS *Prince Regent* (16) enter Sacket’s Harbor, New York, and capture its revenue boat. The British keep the cutter as a prize and return the crew with the message that the Royal Navy will burn the port if the Americans fail to return a captured British brig.

**July 21, 1812.** The revenue boat at Ogdensburg, New York, is trapped by the British warship HMS *Prince Regent* (16).

**October 6, 1812.** British officers and men on barges launched from the HMS *Royal George* (20) capture the revenue boat stationed near Rochester, New York, at the mouth of the Genesee River.

**November 5, 1812.** Newspapers report that General William Hull, governor of Michigan Territory, used a “revenue cutter” for local travel before his military defeat at the hands of British forces.

**March 15, 1814.** Plattsburgh (New York) *Republican* reports that the revenue boat for Lake Champlain barely escaped the powerful British flotilla unleashed on the lake after the winter ice thawed.

**May 5, 1814.** Oswego District customs collector Nathan Sage loses his revenue boat to the local militia as it prepares to defend Oswego, New York, against a British assault.

**August 8, 1814.** Peace negotiations between the United States and Great Britain begin in Ghent, Belgium.

**December 24, 1814.** Genesee District customs collector Caleb Hopkins writes Deputy Treasury Secretary Richard Rush *"I was called on the first of September to the Niagara Frontier and have remained there in generally speaking ever since which has precluded me from making my quarterly returns."*

**December 24, 1814.** Peace treaty (Treaty of Ghent) signed between representatives of the United States and Great Britain at a ceremony in Ghent, Belgium.

**January 4, 1815.** In response to the destructive effects of the war on commerce, New England delegates to the Hartford Convention claim that *"Commerce, the vital spring of New England's prosperity, was annihilated. Embargoes, restrictions, and rapacity of revenue officers, had completed its destruction."*

**January 8, 1815.** Americans defeat a British army in the Battle of New Orleans in the last major land engagement of the war.

**February 11, 1815.** Under the white flag, HMS *Favorite* (18) delivers the peace treaty, Treaty of Ghent, to New York City.

**February 16, 1815.** President Madison signs Treaty of Ghent officially ending the War of 1812.

**February 25, 1815.** Treasury Secretary Alexander J. Dallas issues a circular to all customs collectors regarding future policy in light of the conclusion of the war. In the two-page circular, he instructs, *"[cutter] officers and men must be recommended for their vigilance, activity, skill and good conduct."* Dallas later directs that *"Smuggling, in every form, must be prevented, or punished. And if it be not prevented, the officers of the customs, according to their respective duties and stations, will be held answerable to prove, that there was no want of vigilance on their part."* In the final paragraph, Dallas lists other duties to be carried out by the customs officials, hence their respective cutters, including *"immediate measures will be taken, for restoring the light-houses, piers, buoys, and beacons, within your district and jurisdiction, to the state in which they were before the war"*.

**March 3, 1815.** Congress repeals “*the acts prohibiting the entrance of foreign vessels into the waters of the United States*”, thereby repealing elements of the Non-Intercourse and Non-Importation acts.

**May 30, 1815.** Treasury Secretary Alexander Dallas writes the New York customs collector about building one or more schooner-rigged cutters to replace those lost in the war.

